

San Diego DX Club Bulletin



Year End 2011



REGULAR MEETING SCHEDULE RESUMES IN JANUARY 2012

JANUARY 25, 2012 MEETING NOTICE:

JOIN US AT THE SIZZLER

AERO DRIVE & MURPHY CANYON RD

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 25, 2012

SOCIAL HOUR, 5:00 P.M. DINNER, 5:30 P.M.

**DICK GARREN, K6GAK WILL PRESENT A NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN VIDEO
ON THE 2011 VP8ORK, SOUTH ORKNEY DXPEDITION**

From the Editor

2

IOTA Marathon

3

NA-089

4

Year-Long DX Events

7

Contest Calendar

7



From the Editor . . .

President:

John Barcroft, K6AM
(858) 587-8061
k6am@arrl.net

Vice President:

John Graf, WA6L
jmgraf@gmail.com

Secretary/Treasurer:

Ellen Utschig, N6UWW
(760) 721-2927
elenalaloca@cox.net

Past President:

Gayle Olson, K6GO
(858) 673-9201
k6go@arrl.net

Board of Directors:

Harry Hodges, W6YOO
(760) 743-4212
w6yoo@cox.net

Bob Grimmick, N6OX

(949) 573-1070
n6ox@yahoo.com

Les Nuhn, NN6K

(619) 467-4510
rttyman@aol.com

Ladder:

John Barcroft, K6AM
k6am@arrl.net

Webmaster:

Arnie Lewin, W7BIA

Historian:

Glenn Rattmann, K6NA
(760) 749-3936
k6na@cts.com

Bulletin Editor:

Bob Farkaly, K9RHY
(858) 674-4618
rfarkaly@san.rr.com

The monthly meetings are the events that shape our Club news. The meeting minutes are recorded by the Secretary. Dues are collected and money is spent that leads us to our monthly Treasurer's Report. The meetings offer the club Officers an opportunity to opine on various DX-related topics. The social hour that precedes each meeting is an opportunity to swap stories with old friends. Finally, the meetings provide an opportunity for us to strut after seeing our call signs published in the monthly "Top 10".

But when there are no meetings - like in November and December of 2011 - there is very little content for your editor to edit. Such is the case today.

I thought about "the Bulletin" taking the month off. The XYL and I had escaped to Maui and Lahaina for 10 days and enjoyed some very pleasant and restful down time, but there are DX tidbits to write about and I can't resist.

Hence, I get to write and you get to (I hope!) enjoy a special year-end edition of the SDDXC Bulletin. But I'll keep it short.

See you in January at the Sizzler.

73 and Happy New Year,

Bob, K9RHY

The San Diego DX Club (SDDXC) is among the best known and most highly respected DX clubs in the United States. Since it's founding in 1946, SDDXC members have been on both sides of the pile-ups with DXpeditions and a fair share have achieved "Top of the Honor Roll" status. If you're interested in chasing DX, contesting, exchanging stories or just rubbing elbows with fellow "Big Guns" or "Little Pistols", you'll feel right at home at one of our club meetings. Join us at our next meeting. Visitors are particularly welcome!



IOTA 50th ANNIVERSARY MARATHON

2014 marks the 50th anniversary of the launch of the Islands On The Air (IOTA) Programme by Geoff Watts. To celebrate the occasion, the RSGB IOTA Manager and Committee announced an IOTA activity period in which all licensed amateurs world-wide are invited to participate.

For a two-year period during 2012 and 2013, IOTA chasers are encouraged to contact as many different IOTA groups as possible, and IOTA activators to play their part by operating from as many groups as possible, with special emphasis on the less-frequently activated ones. The points system adopted rewards 'Activators' with higher scores for activating the rarer IOTA groups. Certificates and awards will be available to both 'Chasers' and 'Activators' to reflect attainment of graduated bands of performance.

The challenge provides a level playing field for everyone, whether they are complete newcomers to IOTA or are holders of the prestigious IOTA 1000 Islands Trophy, because everyone starts with a clean slate on 1 January 2012. Furthermore, the long time scale of the challenge means that, should a participant miss a DXpedition to an island, there is a chance that he / she may be able to pick it up at a later date if the group is activated again during the 50th Anniversary Marathon period or, failing that, to replace it with another counter from the 1,100 activated groups.

Prizes will be awarded to the highest-scoring individuals in both the 'Chasers' and 'Activators' sections and these will, if circumstances allow, be presented during the IOTA 50th Anniversary celebrations at the RSGB Convention in 2014. Certificates will be available to other participants who reach the specified grade levels.

For details, see: <http://www.rsgbiota.org/marathon/marathon.pdf>

True Tales from Half Moon Island, NA-089

Printed in the SDDXC Bulletin with the kind permission of the author, Mike Crownover, AB5EB

Activating NA-089 has been a goal of mine for the past several years. The island group was much needed and it was close to home; all the things that make an IOTA activator drool. However, the only islands that I had known to be activated for IOTA were in the Breton National Wildlife Refuge. This group of islands took a direct hit by hurricane Katrina. The problem with them being in the park is that overnight stays are prohibited. At least you can't without some very hard-to-obtain permission. For that reason the islands in the park where prior operations had taken place, did not appeal to me. So that is when my research began on other possible islands and Grand (aka Half-Moon) Island became my target.

Located about four miles off the Mississippi coast, just across the state line of Louisiana, and outside the national park, Half-Moon appeared to be a easy destination for the activation of NA-089. A look at Google Earth maps, however revealed an island that seemed to be more marsh than anything. Having my own boat for about 5 years, and fishing along the Texas coast, I was very familiar with what may appear to be dry land could actually have several inches of water over it at high tide. A call to some local fishing camps only led to more concerns on the possibility of actually operating from the island. One person told me there was "no dry land on Half-Moon". Very little info could be found on the internet regarding the island and the only picture I found was from a fishing trip which showed only marsh. However, after comparing maps to islands on the Texas Coast, I felt confident that dry land existed, even if only a few spots. It was either sand or oyster reefs. Oyster reefs are dry land, but they are made entirely of Oyster shells. So you can imagine how difficult it would be to walk, set up a tent, etc. on such a spot. So in the end I had to really go on my own knowledge of the Gulf Coast and its islands and hope that we would find dry land. Dragan, KOAP later revealed his concerns after we did find land, but in the end it made it even more of an adventure.

There have been 4 known activations of NA-089. The first by Mike, W5ZPA, Larry, K5MK, Chuck, N5GPP, Wondy, K5KR, and Tony, WB5SSB in January, 1989. Another group operated from the same location in 1994 and included Buzz, N5UR, Don, W5FKX, Bruce, K5HAA, Max, K5PP and Randy, WX5L. Both of these activations took place from a facility owned by Kerr McGee. It sounded like a 5 star hotel compared to Half-Moon! The operations took place with prepared meals, A/C and even ice cream! This is the way to do the island. However the facility had long since been removed. In 2003 Silvano, KB5GL (SK) operated from there and was able to make about 800 contacts with poor conditions, operating only during the day. There were also contacts from a operation by NE4G that have been credited to the island. Despite the operations above, the demand for NA-089 outside North America was very high, with the JA's in desperate need of a contact with NA-089.

So now I needed a team to go with me. After a false start earlier in the year due to logistical issues with team members, a planned trip in the spring was cancelled. Looking at the weather that weekend it would have been tough with the wind. My boat is a 24ft bay boat and although it can take 4 to 5 foot seas, I unfortunately know this from experience, it would likely have been too dangerous with a loaded boat full of people and equipment to make a landing. So the trip was moved back to October with the hope of calmer seas and cooler weather.

With the new dates Dragan, KOAP (Z32XX) was now available to make the trip as was Hector, AD6D (XE2K). Dragan lives in Kansas City, and Hector lives in El Centro, CA. I had met Dragan at the previous years IOTA Bash held in San Antonio and I have known Hector for years. I operated with him from XF2K.

Both of these guys are great testers. Hector is exceptional in antenna building and I knew having him on the team with give us a great chance of being successful. Having been on expeditions when factory bought antennas have failed having someone like XE2K on the trip to me was a big plus. This was my first activation with Dragan, but his operating ability was just as I expected. His ability to handle the huge pile ups was obvious on the trip.

The trip to NA-089 was about a 10 hour drive from my home in Texas. We left at 5:00 A.M. with the boat, "Extra Shift", in tow, loaded down with equipment. The trip was fairly uneventful until we had a tire blow out on the boat trailer. After changing to the spare, we had to locate a replacement spare and then we were back on our way to the island. This put us several hours behind schedule, but allowing time for "Murphy" in our planning ensured that we would get to the coast with time to make it to the island before sundown.

It was not until about 5:00 P.M. that we got to the boat ramp in Ansley, MS and put the boat in the water. We were very close now, and with only a few hours of daylight left we headed towards the island. The Extra Shift has GPS and sonar, which was very helpful, but these were unknown waters to me, so I was cautious in leaving the coast. We squeezed through some shallow areas only a few feet deep and finally got into deeper water in the bay. This allowed me to turn my attention to finding a piece of land. This was the moment of truth, and I hoped the island would not let us down.

As we approached the island, we could see a small piece of land. It was a relief for the whole team to see a site we could land on. However, the site was very exposed and was located on the southwest corner of the island. It was an area I had noticed on the map but was not where I wanted to find anchorage for the boat. Traveling around the south tip of the island a little more took us to the cove I was hoping to find. It had a narrow opening and at low tide was about two and a half feet deep. The boat needs about 17 inches of water so there was plenty for us to get into the cove. The cove itself was about 75 feet across and about 150 feet deep into the island. The piece of land was smaller but I felt much more comfortable with the boat in this location.

We were on the island almost immediately and a quick survey showed that an area about 50 feet by 100 feet would be above water at high tide. The surrounding area was dry at low tide but at high tide would be under several inches of water. It was near low tide when we arrived, so Hector began cutting to length a 30m and a 40m $\frac{1}{4}$ wave vertical while Dragan and I worked on putting up the shelter and setting up the radio. By sundown we were on the air making contacts. The first evening was a little slow, but all of us got some time on the air. Hector and Dragan went to bed sometime after midnight and I stayed up until about 4:30 A.M. local time on 40m working JA's. The signals were not strong but I was able to make about 300 contacts overnight.

Dragan and Hector were both out of bed and on the air before sunrise and Dragan worked some JA's at sun-up on Saturday. They both had good runs on 10m and 12m. We set up a tribander for 10/15/20 and we also had an amp that put out about 500w watts. We used a 2kw Honda generator loaned to us by Buzz, N5UR, to run the amp. The pile-ups on 10m and 12m were huge, and the signals were very loud.

I was out of bed a little before 9:00 A.M. on Saturday. Overnight, the winds had changed from the north to the south and at high tide had pushed the Extra Shift onto the mud flat. As the water receded the boat was left half way out of the water. Weighing in at just under 5,000 pounds, the boat was stuck and we would not be able to leave the island if we needed to until the tide returned. It created a logistical issue since the steady breeze would keep it on the mud when the tide rose again and possibly push it further ashore. So I had to put the anchor into the wind and drive PVC pipes along her starboard side which was against the mud. This would keep her from blowing further ashore - at least I hoped it would. The morning at least started off right with a fresh cup of coffee. We had to shut down one of the stations to have enough power to run the coffee machine, but it was well worth it.

The pile-ups on Saturday were fast and furious. 10m and 12m were open to the whole world. We ran two stations with little to no interference. Having the beam and vertical with filters worked great. Having the different polarization of the antennas was important with less than 200 feet of separation. We ran 500w on the tribander. At one point Dragan turned off the amp since the EU pile was so big. He turned it back on as the pile died down.

As the tide moved in, I was able to wiggle the Extra Shift back into deeper water and repositioned her in about 2 feet of water. Before anchoring I took a short boat ride off the island and got some good pictures of the station and watched the sun set. We had several boats fish the cut in the island through out the day. I am sure the site of our antennas created a lot of interest. I did try to fish some that afternoon, but only got one bite. I had caught some shrimp in my casting net, so it was not a issue with bait.

As night fell, Hector and Dragan kept running stations. I was very tired after staying up until after 4:00 A.M. the night before, so I went to bed early. Dragan stayed up, putting many more JA's in the log. The operation had already exceeded my expectations and we still had one more morning. I slept well that night, that is what exhaustion will do for you. It made that piece of sand I was laying on feel a lot better.

I woke early Sunday morning about an hour before sunrise. I had rested enough that I could no longer sleep on the ground. By the way, we had packed 2 cots but they never made it out of the boat. Funny how once you get on the island, it doesn't seem like such a big deal. This has happened to me on prior expeditions too. You just go until you can go no more, and wake up and do it again. I noticed the generators were off and Dragan and Hector both were asleep. I was thinking I should get up and look for JA's on 40m but I had my doubts. I then remembered we had another high tide around midnight, and I wanted to see how the Extra Shift fared.

I am glad I did! The wind had changed direction slightly over night and I had left too much line on the anchor, this allowed the boat to pivot too much on the rope and was half way out of the water! The anchor kept the motor in the water and I quickly went from half awake to thinking we will not be leaving today if she is stuck. I scrambled over Dragan and Hector half asleep to get out of the tent and headed to the boat. I started up the motor and went in reverse but she would not budge.

With the out going tide, I knew I had to free the boat now or we would not be able to leave until the Sunday evening. I was having no success pulling the boat straight off so I began turning the motor to the right and to the left. This made the bow "wiggle" on the mud and she slowly inched back into the water. Another lesson learned: don't leave out too much line on your anchor. I had stayed on islands overnight before on the Texas coast, but have never faced these challenges.

The roar of the 225 HP motor woke the other two in the tent from their peaceful dreams. Hector was ready for coffee but Dragan was still too tired from just a few hours of sleep and he stayed in the tent. I quickly got to the radio and started calling CQ on 40m CW and the JA's were waiting. I was able to work about 40 or so before the band went dead. Hector and I ran nice pile ups all morning and around 10:00 A.M., Dragan made his way out of the tent.

Our goal was to leave the island around noon, so Hector and I began taking down the vertical and Dragan continued working the pile on the tribander. We had most of the camp taken down in about an hour, and just as we thought we might have to drag Dragan off the radio to take down the rest of the station, the generator ran out of gas. So, that was the end of radio activity and we began taking down the rest of the station.

The picture did not come easily. The only camera that we had with a timer we knew how to work was Dragan's cell phone. It took him no less than 30 minutes of trying to figure a way to prop it up where it would stay up. It only had a 5 second delay and the first couple of takes were from about 25 yards away. It was quite comical to watch Dragan sprint to get in the picture. After a few failed attempts it was agreed that we would move about 15 feet away. So after letting Dragan catch his breath, we finally got the picture that is on the QSL card. With the boat loaded we all climbed aboard and began our short ride back to the dock. The trip was uneventful, and we were able to load the boat with no issues. We were back on dry land, but still had at least a 10 hour drive home.



On the way home we had another flat on the boat trailer. Lucky for us it was about 4 miles from where we bought our first replacement tire so we knew exactly where to go. The guys at the tire shop found it a little comical since they had remembered us from just a few days before.

After all was said and done we had 3,700 contacts in the log and many happy hams around the world with another island checked off the list. It was a pleasure doing this with Dragan and Hector, truly an international team. What a great hobby!

AB5EB is an Emergency Medicine physician who lives in New Braunfels, TX, just north of San Antonio. His interests include DXCC (345 confirmed) and the IOTA award (853 confirmed) program. He also enjoys operating from IOTA's. AB5EB has operated from the following IOTA's (NA13, NA119, NA168, NA158, NA143, NA197, NA92, NA14, NA55, NA44, NA45, NA209, NA246 and NA89).

ARRL Diamond DXCC Challenge

2012 is the 75th anniversary of the ARRL's DXCC Award. The world's preeminent DXing award continues to be DXCC, so reaching the "Diamond milestone" is an event that we all want to celebrate. Going back to the roots of the award, and specifically reading the 1937 DXCC List ([January 1937 QST, pages 52-53](#)) to learn what countries were counted at the onset led us to create the Diamond DXCC Challenge.

The country list we will use for the **Diamond DXCC Challenge** is based upon the list of 231 places shown in 1937. We tried to find corresponding entities today that would represent the places listed in 1937, and we were mostly successful. There are a couple of places that were merged, like French and British New Hebrides, and the Papua and New Guinea Territories. In those places, for 2012 if you work a YJ or a P29 (on the main island of New Guinea) you will get credit for working two entities! Many other oddities are sprinkled throughout the list, too. Returning to the air in 2012 will be the Canal Zone (any HP operating within 8 kilometers of the Panama Canal), the Cities of Gdansk, Poland, and Ifni, Morocco and Balochistan. The list is fascinating and leads us to learn more about world history and how geopolitics has changed leading up to today.

As you "check off" these entities during the course of 2012 working DX (which is an achievement even today) using spotting networks, pan-adapters, 200 watt rigs and stacked tribanders, imagine how DXing was different in the early years of radio and DXCC! Working Tibet or Aldabra with 50 watts and crystal-controlled transmitters to simple wire antennas had to be a thrill like no other in that time for ham radio operators.

The Diamond DXCC certificate will be available for working 100 of the 226 entities, and will be endorsable at 5 levels: 125, 150, 175, 200, and 225. If anyone works all 226, there will be a special award for that remarkable achievement! There will also be awards for the top finishers. We hope to publish award recipients' call signs online during the year, and identify high numbers.

There will be a Diamond DXCC Challenge Honor Roll. The Honor Roll level will be determined by the leader in worked entities submitted to HQ, and the bottom of the Honor Roll will be 9 entities less than that of the leader. Example: If W1AW has worked 165 entities, the bottom of the Honor Roll will be 156 entities. In February 2013, HQ will issue a final Honor Roll tally with overall leaders.

2012 CQ DX Marathon

The 2012 edition of the CQ DX Marathon begins at 0000 UTC on January 1, 2012 and runs through 2359 UTC on December 31, 2012. The goal, as always, is to work as many countries and CQ zones as possible at least once during the calendar year. There are no significant changes to the rules this year, but there will be a significant increase in the number of plaques awarded. Sincere thanks to our new sponsors! We will continue to use a downloadable Microsoft Excel® template (or equivalent) which may be filled in and emailed to a special address as your log entry. Conversion programs are available to automatically populate the template from your logging program. See the DX Marathon website for details.

January 2012 DX Contests

Contest	Start Date	Start Time	End Date	End Time
North American QSO Party CW	14-Jan	1800Z	15-Jan	0600Z
North American QSO Party SSB	21-Jan	1800Z	22-Jan	0600Z
CQ 160-Meter Contest, CW	27-Jan	2200Z	29-Jan	2159Z

DX Is!!